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Exploitation in College Sports:

The Amateurism Hoax and the True Value of an Education

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Introduction

Racism and exploitation in intercollegiate athletics have garnered a great deal of scholarly attention over the last thirty years. As athletic departments' revenues from ticket sales and from football and men's basketball television contracts continue to grow, the critical discourse regarding the treatment of student-athletes mounts. Between 1996 and 2013, the TV contracts for major college football grew from $185 million to $725 million, and the 2017 NCAA March Madness basketball tournament generated $1.1 billion in television rights alone.

However, the NCAA national office is not alone in such riches. Individual universities enjoy sizeable revenues from their successful football and men's basketball teams with schools like the University of Wisconsin and the University of California, Los Angeles, receiving $6.5 million each for merely participating in the 1994 Rose Bowl Game, the post-season event dubbed "The Granddaddy of Them All" (Eitzen, 1996). Some of these bowl game revenues are passed along to college coaches in the form of incentive bonuses on top of their considerable salaries (the average salary for major college football head coach during the 2016-2017 academic year was in excess of $3.3 million) but most of these revenues are reinvested in the program or used to support other, non-revenue generating teams on campus.

Furthermore, a successful football or men's basketball program will help businesses in the surrounding community. During the early part of the 1990s, Eitzen (1996) estimated that the Louisiana State University athletic programs created $65 million in sales for Baton Rouge-area business and $25.5 million in additional household income and supported over 1,600 jobs.

Meanwhile college merchandising has grown into a $4.6 billion industry, with hundreds of millions of dollars paid out to universities annually (Eitzen, 1996; Meghamez, 2015).

Thus, the economic impact of major college football and men's basketball programs—which is mediated primarily through advertising and merchandising contracts—fill the universities' coffers, finance rich contracts for coaches and administrators, stimulate economic growth in the community, and even support other athletic teams on campus, but the very athletes who compete at this level, who drive the demand for tickets, and who ultimately create the revenue are relegated to amateur status and precluded from receiving any cash considerations for the considerable monies they bring to the NCAA and its member institutions. Some regard this economic exploitation by which athletes in revenue-generating college sports of football and men's basketball do not reap the financial gains for their considerable labors as a "new slavery." In *The New Plantation: Black Athletes, College Sports, Predominantly White Institutions*, Hawkins (2013) claims that "the dehumanization of Black athletes takes place when these institutions value Blacks more as athletes than as students."

While slavery analogies in intercollegiate athletics trivialize the sufferings and injustices perpetrated against many Blacks during the 18th and 19th centuries, certain scholars defend this metaphor, claiming that the modern-day power imbalances in on-the-field and off-the-field dynamics are rooted in the physical bondage of slavery where slaveowners would hold annual harvest festivals, helping to diffuse latent thoughts of insurrection by allowing slaves to manifest their suppressed aggression and hostility through competition, thus preserving the institution of slavery for another year (Rhoden, 2006). Whether or not these references to slavery are warranted, the "legacy of using sports to stake a symbolic claim to humanity" has certainly marked Black history in the United States, and the contemporary enrichment of American

universities through the athletic accomplishments of disproportionately Black student-athletes builds on this tradition, with other scholars alternatively comparing the institution to colonialism (Branch, 2011).

Over the last decade, there has been widespread support for allowing college athletes to receive compensation beyond the value of their scholarships. Former star players and members of the media have drawn attention to the injustice inherent to a system that enriches universities and high-ranking individuals with multi-million dollar contracts without providing fair compensation to the entertainers on the field or court. Some critics have dramatically referred to college athletes as "gladiators," but the fact remains that many student-athletes who are featured on ESPN, ABC, or Fox every Saturday, struggle to fill up their cars with gasoline when it's time to go home for the holidays (Meggyesy, 2000). On this point, the NCAA has acquiesced to a small degree by instituting a "cost of attendance" stipend intended to cover expenses not included in tuition, room and board, and books; typically this stipend amounts to approximately $800 per month during the school year, depending on the college or university. Even after the cost of attendance stipend is included, the exchange remains unbalanced because the NCAA employs an essentially cost-free—and disproportionately Black—labor force and offers the "mere pittance" of a scholarship in return (Meggyesy, 2000). While the value of free tuition should not be minimized, student-athletes often receive an inferior college education. Calls to "fairly compensate" athletes have been heard in the Supreme Court and in the chambers of Congress, with Sen. Christopher S. Murphy (D-CT) recently releasing a report criticizing the $14-billion-a-year intercollegiate athletics industry "for spending more on coach salaries than player scholarships," arguing that the current system "enriches broadcasters, apparel companies, and athletic departments at the expense of athletes" (Hruby, 2019).

All of these criticisms and calls to action from former players, ex-administrators, columnists, and members of the general public are well-founded. The status quo is situated precariously within the legislative framework of the NCAA and amateur athletics. While there was a time when the NCAA was right to protect its athletes from malicious corporate interests, that was also a time when the NCAA earned only modest revenues and college sports was yet to become "big business." In light of the ballooning of the sports entertainment industry in the last quarter-century, the NCAA should compensate athletes in proportion to the revenues they create for their respective institutions, holding the full amount in trust until the athletes have exhausted their collegiate eligibility.

The Fallacy of Modern Amateurism

The NCAA's Historical Foundation

At the turn of the 20th century, there was only one way to watch a college football game: Attend. Prior to the first mechanical representation of a football game in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1911 and the first local and nationwide radio broadcasts in 1921 and 1922, respectively, if you did not attend the game then you waited to hear about it on the radio that evening or to read about it in the newspaper (St. John, 2011). College football existed in a vacuum—at least compared to how it is enjoyed today—but spectators and administrators had growing concerns. One hundred years ago, the game was tremendously violent: Runners could continue to push and crawl for extra yardage until they cried the proverbial "Uncle" when they shouted, "Down!" This convention led to massive scrums on the field where gouging of the eyes or genitals was common and death was sometimes "part of the game." In addition to the rising death count, administrators also worried about the increasing "professionalism" of their teams, so on December 28, 1905, sixty-two institutions of higher education joined together to form the

Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) with a shared goal: "To maintain intercollegiate athletics as an integral part of the educational program and the athlete as an integral part of the student body" (Meggyesy, 2000).

Although the IAAUS later changed its name to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the mission remained the same, and the organization enjoyed relative stability through the first half of the century, but in 1951 the organization faced serious threats and appointed Walter Byers its first executive director. Ironically, the major threat that prompted Byers' appointment was the proliferation of the television. Studies indicated that attendance numbers (and thus ticket and concession sales) were falling precipitously as customers elected to watch the games for free in the comfort of their own homes. Prior to the 1950s, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Pennsylvania were the only universities with national TV contracts, but the "television threat" led the NCAA to outlaw televised games, except for a specific few licensed by the national office (Branch, 2011). Notre Dame and Penn resisted the new legislation but ultimately conformed to its demands. By controlling the television broadcasts, Byers successfully consolidated the NCAA's power.

Byers and the NCAA won two more important victories over the next decade. In June of 1952, they brokered a one-year, $1.14 million agreement with NBC for a carefully structured package of games, but the most important breakthrough came nine years later when Congress passed the Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961 (Branch, 2011). At the time, professional football was also growing in popularity, and the Sports Broadcasting Act granted the National Football League an antitrust exemption, but the exemption was conditional upon the blackout of professional football on Saturdays (Branch, 2011). With the NFL forced to broadcast its games

on Sunday, Byers and the NCAA ostensibly had a monopoly on the Saturday television market. This was the beginning of college gameday as it is known today.

Colonialism and the NCAA

College athletics are widely lauded as a mechanism of social mobility and racial integration that allow ethnic minority students—who might not have the opportunity to attend college otherwise—to attain a post-secondary education in exchange for their athletic talents. This paternalism, however, is troubling because the *quid pro quo* of athletic service for a college education is an unfair exchange. Not only do tuition and the "cost of attendance" stipend that men's basketball and football players receive pale in comparison to the revenues these players generate for their schools and for the NCAA, but college athletes—all too often—do not receive the education they were promised. A 2013 survey examined the racial inequities at Power Five schools—that is the schools hailing from the five major athletic conferences—the Big Ten, Big 12, Atlantic Coast (ACC), Southeastern (SEC), and Pac-12 conferences. These five conferences have produced 29 of the last 30 NCAA football champions (with the exception being unaffiliated Notre Dame in 1988) and 24 of the last 30 NCAA basketball champions (Connecticut and Villanova each having won multiple titles over that span), but only 55.2% of Black male student-athletes in these sports graduated from their Power Five schools within six years (Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013). Compare that statistic to 69.3% of student-athletes overall, 60.1% of all Black undergraduate men, and 76.3% of the overall undergraduate student population. Indeed, the over-representation of Blacks on revenue-generating teams coupled with their lower graduation rates compared to other cohorts evidences the racial opportunity gap on many major college campuses (Van Rheenen, 2012).

That is not to say that the issue of NCAA economic exploitation exclusively affects Black athletes, but it is impossible to adequately address these issues without acknowledging the significance of race. Former apparel marketing executive Sonny Vaccaro explains: "Ninety percent of the NCAA revenue is produced by 1 percent of the athletes" and this one percent is "ninety percent African-American" (Van Rheenen, 2012). Although not applying exclusively to Black athletes, the claims of systemic exploitation in major intercollegiate athletics do seem to affect Black male athletes in particular. Some critics lament that the current arrangement in which the NCAA and its members institutions share the largess of the financial rewards while student-athletes get almost nothing has the "unmistakable whiff of the plantation," but Branch regards it as a form of colonialism "imposed by well-meaning paternalists and rationalized with hoary sentiments about caring for the well-being of the colonized" (Branch, 2011). Although some individuals within the NCAA blame professional sports agents who predatorily associate with promising young players who they hope to sign to professional contracts, former LSU basketball coach Dale Brown blames the schools: "Look at the money we make off of predominantly poor Black kids. We're the whoremasters" (Branch, 2011).

The Definition of Amateurism

The NCAA's profit model relies heavily on an extremely low-cost pool of laborers who renounce all forms of compensation and forfeit their rights to their name, image, and likeness—all under the guise of "amateurism." When asked to defend its compensation regulations, the NCAA harkens back to its founding mission, "to maintain intercollegiate athletics as an integral part of the educational program," and claims that paying student-athletes would professionalize them, causing "profit making objectives [to] overshadow educational objectives" (*Kupec v. ACC*, 1975).

In his later years, Walter Byers became disillusioned with the amateur system he had endeavored to create, writing a memoir that often speaks critically of the NCAA. Byers first coined the phrase "student-athlete" in 1951 in the wake of Ray Dennison's football-related death (discussed below), defining it in appropriately ambiguous terms so the NCAA would not be required to pay workers' compensation benefits to players (because they were not employees) or to pay them wages (because they were not professionals). After Byers strategically defined "student-athlete," the NCAA coined its definition of an "amateur" as "any gentleman who has never competed in an open competition nor for public payment nor admission money" (Vanderford, 2015).

Although the judicial system has shown support for the amateur model, debates continue about definitions of amateurism and student-athlete and the idea of fair compensation. The term "student-athlete" first came into the vernacular in the 1950s after Ray Dennison died playing football for Fort Lewis A&M University. After his death, Ray's wife sought workmen's compensation benefits, claiming that his football scholarship made the fatality work-related, but the Colorado Supreme Court disagreed, contending that student-athletes are not eligible for workmen's compensation because colleges are "not in the football business" (*State Compensation Insurance Fund v. Industrial Commission of Colorado*, 1957). Even in the 1984 case in which the Supreme Court declared that the NCAA's television plan violated antitrust laws, the courts once again supported the importance of amateurism in college athletics: "The NCAA plays a critical role in the maintenance of a revered tradition of amateurism in college sports. There can be no question but that it needs ample latitude to play that role" (*NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, 1984). The Dennison and Board of Regents decisions codified intercollegiate amateurism and protected the NCAA from compensation

claims, but it remains difficult to reconcile the fact that the NCAA is incorporated as a non-profit. After all, the organization sells its annual television and apparel rights for billions of dollars. While the rules of amateurism govern athletes and depress labor costs for the schools, revenues are determined on the open market (Meggyesy, 2000).

The NCAA and its member institutions are uniquely positioned, spanning the divide between non-profit higher education and for-profit sports entertainment. Some critics believe that the NCAA should be forced to pay taxes on its earnings and to pay its employees (i.e., players) as any other business would be required to do, but—under the status quo—the NCAA's revenues are determined by the powers of the free market while its expenditures and profits are treated as those of a non-profit. Additionally, the NCAA athletic "labor market" is exempt from federal and state antitrust and workers' compensation laws (Murty, Roebuck, & McCamey, 2014). When the NCAA was established, these were relatively unimportant issues because college athletics were not big business, and—even today—the vast majority of NCAA-sanctioned events are not generating substantial revenue, but rules governing the NCAA "labor market" are of paramount importance in the modern sports entertainment industry, especially for elite college football and basketball players.

While the overwhelming majority of college athletes represent very small revenues for the universities they represent, superstar football and men's basketball players have tremendous value to the athletic and academic brands of their respective schools. For instance, Cam Newton—the former Heisman trophy-winning quarterback from Auburn University—was estimated to have generated $3.5 million annually for his school (Moskowitz & Wertheim, 2010). This number drastically exceeds the monetary value of the scholarship he received, and his revenue producing power was far greater than the $200,000 illegal bribe that his father

solicited from Mississippi State University during Newton's recruitment. It is easy to see why an athlete like Newton could feel exploited by his school or by the NCAA, which prohibits him from soliciting monetary remuneration for his contributions to university revenues

Student-athletes are not only prohibited from selling their athletic talents directly, but they are also precluded from selling their image or likeness. In the process of signing an athletic scholarship at an NCAA-sanctioned institution, student-athletes simultaneously agree to the NCAA-defined principles of amateurism and forfeit their rights to one's own persona—termed "name, image, and likeness" (NIL)—as part of the document referred to as the "student-athlete statement." Although the student-athlete statement could have grown out of good intentions, aiming to protect student-athletes from commercial exploitation, the provisions under Section 12.5.1.1.1 of the NCAA manual effectively transfer ownership of athletes' identities to the NCAA, allowing the NCAA, or a licensing company acting on its behalf, to use student-athletes' NILs to promote NCAA events in perpetuity (NCAA, 2015).

Given the NCAA's stance that amateurism is critically important because profit-making objective would spoil the educational environment, the provision in the NCAA manual that allows the organization to use student-athletes' NILs *in perpetuity* is somewhat surprising. After all, how could the profit-making objective undermine education in the decades after a former student-athlete leaves the college ranks? College athletes ought to regain exclusive ownership of their NILs once they have exhausted their collegiate eligibility—or so thought Oscar Robertson and Ed O'Bannon. Both former collegiate basketball stars were surprised to learn that the NCAA owned their likenesses even after they left college basketball for the NBA. Robertson, a national player of the year winner and three-time All-American at the University of Cincinnati, was infuriated when he learned that the NCAA was selling his name and image on trading cards—

and not paying any royalties—a full fifty years after his amateur career ended (Branch, 2011). O'Bannon, meanwhile, became the lead plaintiff in a landmark antitrust class action lawsuit.

The *O'Bannon v. NCAA* case focused on the use of former college players' likenesses in a popular videogame franchise licensed by the NCAA. O'Bannon is one of the most storied basketball players in the illustrious history of UCLA, having won the Wooden Award as national player of the year and the Final Four Most Outstanding Player en route to guiding his team to the 1995 national championship. Because of his illustrious college career, O'Bannon is featured as an historic player in college basketball videogames. While the character in the game did not share O'Bannon's name, it had all of his physical characteristics, his jersey number, and his same left-handed shot (*O'Bannon v. NCAA*, 2015). Although the game used his likeness—along with those of many other former players—O'Bannon was not receiving royalties, prompting him to bring a case against the NCAA, alleging that the NCAA's amateurism rules wrongly prevented him from profiting from his NIL both during and after his amateur career. The US Court of Appeals ruled in O'Bannon's favor, holding that the NCAA's amateurism rules unreasonably restrained college athletes (*O'Bannon v. NCAA*, 2015). The NCAA and Electronic Arts, Inc., discontinued college sports videogame as a result of the decision.

The rationale of the O'Bannon case is equally applicable to other forms of NCAA merchandise as it is to videogames. Around the country, college bookstores sell replica football and basketball jerseys of their teams' star players. While these replicas are not marked with the athletes' names on the back, the association of a particular athlete with a particular jersey number is strong enough to sell merchandise. Even worse, basketball commentator Jay Bilas tweeted screenshots of the NCAA's official team shop where searching a student-athlete's name (specifically, South Carolina standout Jadeveon Clowney) would lead to a page of results where

one could purchase that athlete's jersey (Parrish, 2015). Thus, the NCAA, as recently as 2013, used college athlete's names to increase apparel revenue.

Both the NCAA and its member universities use athletes' NILs in ways that players are not permitted. The level of hypocrisy is comically tragic: If student-athletes sell autographs or jerseys, they are punished, but the team stores sell replica jerseys, and the schools reap tremendous financial rewards from allowing sponsors to emblazon the jerseys with their corporate logos (Meghamez, 2015). In 2010, star University of Georgia wide receiver A.J. Green was suspended four games after admitting to selling his jersey from the previous year's bowl game in order to fund his spring break plans, but it is a cruel irony that—while Green sat out those four games—the team store continued to sell replicas of his No. 8 jersey (Branch, 2011). Walter Byers analysis sums it up well: "The college player cannot sell his own feet (the coach does that) nor can he sell his own name (the college will do that). This is the plantation mentality resurrected and blessed by today's campus executives." (Branch, 2011)

Admittedly, cases like these are unique due to the magnitude of Newton, Robertson, O'Bannon, and Green's collegiate success, but many student-athletes feel they are being exploited. In a study of student-athletes by Derek Van Rheenen (2011), nearly one-third of all participants reported feeling exploited, with athletes in revenue sports being seven times more likely to report such feelings than their peers in other sports. Athletes participating in football and men's basketball at the intercollegiate level are undoubtedly aware that athletics revenues for NCAA member schools increased 8000% from 1976 to 1997 and that the NCAA itself enjoyed a revenue increase from $16.6 million to $267 million over the same span, and both have continued to rise over the past two decades (Murty et al., 2014).

The Fallacy of Amateurism

The enormous revenues that college teams generate, the nature of the relationship between players and their institutions, and the intense demands of competing at the top levels of intercollegiate sport make these athletes professional in everything but name. Contrary to the NCAA's self-professed goal of separating the worlds of professional and amateur sports and integrating athletics into the American model of higher education, corporate interests have comparable influence in the realm of college sports as they do in the NFL or the NBA. The NCAA has been widely-scrutinized for its farcical status as a tax-exempt non-profit, with critics drawing attention to the fact that the allegedly "not-for-profit" organization spent nearly $1 million on private airline charters in 2006 alone (Branch, 2011). Interestingly enough—the NBA and NFL only relinquished their tax-exempt statuses within the last fifteen years amid growing public demands, and there are calls for the NCAA to do the same. The *Los Angeles Time*s highlights the disparity between NFL and NCAA compensation, noting that the average NFL salary in 2017 topped $2.7 million while the value of the average college scholarship hovers around $30,000 (Klein & DiGiovanna, 2018). With the student-athlete statement enabling the NCAA to corner a $4.6 billion merchandise market without compensating athletes for the use of their NILs, some pundits justifiably claim that the NCAA is not a "regulator of amateurism but rather a seller of a lucrative product" (Cronk, 2013; Jones, 2015; McLeran, 2017).

In return for their services on the field of play and for the use of their NILs, a student-athlete is offered a scholarship covering tuition, room and board, textbooks, and a few other minor expenses, but even this compensation package is marred with loopholes that favor universities at the athlete's expense. University of Northern Colorado professor and former college baseball player George Sage (1998) contends that a scholarship "is nothing but a work contract" that offers a poverty wage to student-athlete entertainers and subsequently directs

billions of dollars to the universities and the NCAA, but student-athletes participating in football and men's basketball have little choice but to sign such exploitative agreements because the NCAA serves as the developmental league for the NFL and the NBA—unlike the MLB, which finances its own minor league baseball system (Meghamez, 2015). Participation in intercollegiate athletics is therefore a necessary step for a promising young athlete aspiring to a career in professional football or basketball, so he waives his rights to publicity and compensation in order to receive a scholarship.

Tragically though, signing a scholarship contract, does not always guarantee four years of higher education. In the face of protests by predominantly Black student-athletes in the early 1970s, the NCAA outlawed four-year athletic scholarships and replaced them with one-year grants to be renewed at the coaches' discretion (Meggyesy, 2000). It was only in 2015 that the commissioners of the Power Five conferences decided to protect student-athletes and to return to guaranteed scholarships—much to the chagrin of the many coaches who preferred one-year scholarships that could be reduced or revoked if an athlete was not performing at a commensurate level (Cronk, 2013). In this way, renewable one-year grants allow coaches to force players off the team, but players cannot leave the program on their own accord without penalty; if a player elects to transfer to another institution, he or she must forfeit one year of eligibility. Meanwhile, these same coaches are regarded as independent, professional agents, frequently moving from school to school without penalty, leaving behind the players they recruited (Murty et al., 2014).

The suggestion that coaches have the unique power to move between institutions is not meant to imply that the college coaches don't face their own frustrations. Fan bases and administrators are increasingly impatient with their coaches, expecting to compete for conference

championships early in a coach's tenure because winning in football and basketball directly impacts the school's bottom line (Underwood, 1980). The pressure to win explains why coaches impose such demanding schedules on the student-athletes that preclude them from engaging in activities and experiences that promote career development beyond athletics or those activities that foster holistic personal development. Former Duke University basketball star Shane Battier once testified to a Congressional committee that his training schedule as an amateur under hall of fame coach Mike Krzyzewski at Duke was more demanding than his schedule as a professional in the NBA (Cronk, 2013).

Such a demanding training schedule in addition to a full academic course load is often too much to bear for eighteen-year-old college athletes. Although the NCAA manual limits in-season training to twenty hours per week—allowing even less in the off-season—the rule is poorly enforced and college football and basketball players in particular are often expected to spend 40 or more hours per week practicing, running, lifting weights, studying their playbooks and opponent tendencies, and receiving preventative medical treatment on their bodies—and this estimate does not even account for time spent travelling to and from games, which regularly involves red-eye flights or long bus rides (Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007). One study at Brigham Young University found that the average player at the school spent 2,202 hours per year training to be a football player, or an average of 42.3 hours every single week of the year (Seggar, n.d.).

The relationship between player and coach is often portrayed as a formative one, with the coach's "tough love" motivated ultimately by the desire to develop the young person into an exemplary adult, but this portrayal romanticizes the truth. The time demands placed on college athletes and the pressures on college coaches usually prevent the archetypal player-coach

relationship from forming. As John Underwood explains, “It doesn’t matter what percentage of [coaches’] athletes graduate or take a useful place in society. It doesn’t even matter how well the coaches teach the sports. All that matters are the flashing scoreboard lights” (Underwood, 1984, Eitzen & Purdy, 1986).

Thus, even if coaches and administrators genuinely care about the academic and personal successes of student-athletes, the demands of an ever-more competitive marketplace lead to contradictory messages (Martin, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2010). Increasingly, amateurism appears to be a myth in intercollegiate athletics as athletes who generate massive revenue vis-à-vis merchandise and television contacts are bound to their respective institutions by contract and are expected to perform like professionals. Coaches and administrators meticulously plan the student-athletes’ days, so that they can train like professional athletes while simultaneously satisfying academic requirements off the field. From wake-up times to training sessions to what and when they eat, many student-athletes are shackled to their athletic identities in ways that the average college student simply cannot imagine. What’s worse, the perpetuation of the fallacy of amateurism has spawned an underground economy that amounts to a de facto professional marketplace for amateur athletes in which alumni, shoe companies, professional agents, and AAU, high school, and college coaches alike barter to influence elite high school players (Meggyesy, 2000).

Ethics in Big-Time College Sports

Shoe Money and Other Recruiting Improprieties

The Carnegie Foundation made headlines in 1929 with a report showing that the recruitment of college players had become “nationwide commerce” (Branch, 2011). The commerce referred to in the report pales in comparison to the recruiting scandals of the last fifty

years. Coaches and boosters have gone to great lengths to lure impactful prospects to their universities, with perhaps the most famous case involving Eric Dickerson, who graduated from Sealy HS (TX) in 1979. Texas A&M was alleged to have sent the highly-touted prospect a brand new Pontiac Trans AM (facetiously dubbed the "Trans A&M" in many newspapers), but Dickerson ultimately decided to attend the much smaller Southern Methodist University in Dallas. During the 1980s, it was discovered that SMU had been paying players like Dickerson illegally out of a slush fund, resulting in the football team being banned from competition for the 1987 season.

Corporate interests bear critical influence in the world of college recruiting as companies like Nike and Adidas outfit college athletes in their apparel in order to market to the public audience on national TV. As far back as 1993, it was well-known that one college basketball coach received a $1 million down payment and annual installments of $375,000 for fifteen years from Nike in exchange for his team wearing its shoes, and these shoe contracts have continued to the present day with coaches like Louisville's Rick Pitino profiting even more than their respective universities (Eitzen, 1996). When questioned in 2001 about the involvement of shoe companies in intercollegiate athletics, Nike executive Sonny Vaccaro explained: "We want to put our materials on the bodies of your athletes, and the best way to do that is buy your school. Or buy your coach" (Branch, 2011). Unfortunately, coaches are not the only ones being bought.

Shoe companies have also played a pivotal role in the evolution of summer-league basketball. Founded in 1888, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) oversees competition in many sports, but most notably basketball. Starting as a league to create year-round basketball competition, the AAU circuit has become the main battleground for college basketball recruiting with more emphasis placed on these elite tournaments than on a prospect's games with his high

school team (Dalton, 2016). The shoe companies sponsor AAU teams—outfitting them with uniforms and money for travel—in an attempt to build brand loyalty with tomorrow's NBA superstars (Mellinger, 2019). University boosters have also jumped headlong into the AAU circuit, and although the NCAA prohibits boosters from having direct contact with prospective student-athletes, they cannot stop these individuals from supporting AAU teams (Dalton, 2016).

Neither shoe companies nor boosters should be regarded as philanthropic entities simply hoping to "advance the game of basketball." On the contrary, both groups are shrewd investors hoping to buy influence with talented young players. While boosters hope that their investment might sway a prospect toward their preferred university, Nike and Adidas hope that talented high school players will elect to attend a university they sponsor with the ultimate goal for these shoe companies being to sign professional basketball players to lucrative endorsement contracts once they leave college. While many AAU coaches do not accept money from university or corporate representatives—focusing alternatively on teaching the fundamentals of game and developing young people—there are other coaches who do. As a result, many of the top AAU teams have restructured themselves as non-profit organizations so they are not required by law to identify their donors. According to Dalton (2016), two-thirds of the nation's top AAU basketball teams are incorporated as non-profits, thus protecting boosters, corporate interests, and the money they provide.

While boosters and shoe companies like Nike and Adidas display questionable ethics as they attempt to influence college prospects as early as the seventh grade, the universities themselves employ recruiting tactics that are equally morally ambiguous. While there have been reports of illicit benefits such as alcohol, strippers, and prostitutes being provided to recruits at the University of Colorado in 2004 and the University of Louisville in 2014, most of the cheating

in college recruiting is far more innocuous (Lee, 2010). From free team apparel to free hotels for families on unofficial recruiting visits, numerous coaches and universities prefer to operate on the edges of NCAA rules in an attempt to maintain national prominence rather than break rules outright (O'Neil, 2018).

One common method of rule circumvention, known as a "package deal," involves hiring a player's parent or coach or offering a scholarship to a friend or sibling contingent upon the player's commitment to the university. Such arrangements amount to a legal form of payment, compensating players and their families for the student-athlete's talents (Kriegel, 2009). More often than not, the friend, relative, or coach involved in the package deal lacks the necessary professional or athletic qualifications for the role they receive, but this tactic has been widely and persistently used since the 1980s, with two instances at the University of Kansas occurring twenty years apart (Davis, 2008).

In 1983, prized basketball recruit Danny Manning was expected to commit to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, but two days before Manning's official decision, University of Kansas head coach Larry Brown hired Danny's father Ed as an assistant coach (Garrity, 1983). Manning went on to become the No. 1 pick in the 1988 NBA draft after leading KU to the national championship earlier that year as his dad watched from the bench. Kansas did not win another title until the 2008 season when guard Mario Chalmers hit a buzzer-beating three-point shot to send the national championship game into overtime. Just as Manning played in the Final Four with his dad on the bench, Mario Chalmers celebrated with his teammates as his father Ronnie, KU's Director of Basketball Operations (DBO), looked on. Kansas coach Bill Self had hired Ronnie as DBO after Mario committed to the Jayhawks, but Ronnie did not remain with the program long-term, resigning once Mario declared for the NBA Draft (Kriegel,

2009). While the University of Kansas won two national championships with star players recruited with package deals, they are but one of many programs that attempt to "sweeten the pot" for recruits in this way. Basketball programs including USC with recruit Daniel Hackett, Arizona State with James Harden, and Duke with Chris Duhon and Carlos Boozer and football programs including Michigan with Rashan Gary and Georgia with Lewis Cine—among many other programs—have all recruited athletes with the promise of scholarship or employment for friends and relatives—either directly with the university or with a prominent booster's company.

Recently, however, package deals came under attack as the NCAA approved the Individual Associated with a Prospect (IAWP) rule in 2017. This rule prohibits colleges from hiring high school coaches or other individuals associated with a recruited athlete to non-coaching roles during the two years before and after the prospect's enrollment. Notably, colleges can still hire a friend or family member to be an assistant coach, but this is—in metaphorical terms—much more "expensive" than hiring for a role like Director of Basketball Operations or Director of High School Relations because the number of coaching positions is limited by NCAA rules but the number of non-coaching support positions is not. Even so, college coaches and boosters motivated to capture the national spotlight will continue to find creative ways to circumvent the rules and gain an edge in recruiting—cheating the spirit of the law, if not the letter of it.

Compromising Admission Practices

Another controversial aspect of college athletics is the use of modified admission standards when reviewing recruited athletes' applications. Universities competing in major Division I football and basketball have a substantial incentive to relax their admission standards for athletes because lowering admission criteria increases the size of the recruiting pool for

sports, presumably enabling coaches to attract more impactful players and bring future revenues to the school (Brown, 1996). Research has shown that each additional premium athlete—or one who will eventually be drafted into the NFL or NBA—generates in excess of $500,000 of additional revenue for their team. Additionally, each 0.124 decrease in GPA requirements for college football players has been shown to be associated with attracting one more premium player and between $482,000 and $658,000 of associated revenue (Brown, 1996).

Lowering admission standards for athletes, however, is not without consequences. While those who support admitting less qualified students on the basis that they compete in revenue-generating sports might argue that the additional $482,000 to $658,000 in income accrued as the result of relaxing GPA requirements could be used to fund other athletic programs or the university's general fund, lowering admission standards could potentially diminish the school's academic reputation, stunting future research donations and shrinking the size of the general applicant pool (Brown, 1996). Moreover, reducing admission standards might hurt college athletes. In a study of all scholarship athletes at Colorado State University from 1970 to 1980, Eitzen and Purdy (1986) found that only three percent of athletes admitted with a high school GPA less than 2.50 and only eighteen percent of those admitted with a combined SAT score less than 700 graduated within six years.

There are numerous other stories of underqualified students gaining admission on the basis of their athletic abilities. For example, Chris Washburn, who played basketball at North Carolina State University in the 1980s, was admitted into school with an SAT score of 470—which was not much better than the lowest possible score (400) or the score obtained with random guessing (460) and was dismal compared to the freshman-class average at the school (1,030) (Kirshenbaum, 1985). Even worse, Creighton University basketball player Kevin Ross

competed and attended class for four years but could not read or write above the second grade level (Eitzen & Purdy, 1986).

In light of stories like those of Chris Washburn and Kevin Ross, educators implored the NCAA to raise admission standards in the 1980s. The NCAA agreed and enacted Proposition 48 in 1986. Proposition 48 established eligibility requirements for a high school athlete to receive an athletic scholarship, mandating the prospective student-athlete maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0 in eleven core classes (which was later revised to ten core classes in 2016) and a minimum SAT score of 700 or an ACT score of 15 (Siegel, 1994). Students meeting only one of these requirements are permitted to enroll but cannot compete for the university during the first year. These so-called "partial qualifiers" are expected to make substantial academic progress during their first year of college to regain athletic eligibility. However, Proposition 48 did not receive universal support. Temple University's basketball coach at the time, John Chaney, argued that it was a discriminatory practice: "Opportunities will be taken away from youngsters, and many more Black youngsters in particular" (Siegel, 1994). Indeed, the Black Coaches Association (BCA) cited the fact the 90% of the student-athletes deemed non-qualifiers in 1988 were Black (Siegel, 1994). Eventually, opponents of Proposition 48 argued its racial bias all the way to the courts where, in March 1999, a federal judge ruled in *Cureton v. NCAA* that the use of minimum standardized test scores to eliminate student-athletes from eligibility was discriminatory toward Blacks, but the decision was reversed on technicality in the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals later that same year (Meggyesy, 2010).

NCAA Core Values and Unequal Enforcement

The current state of intercollegiate athletics did not arise overnight. The NCAA commits itself to seven core values including "the collegiate model of athletics and the pursuit of

excellence in both academics and athletics" (NCAA Core Values, 2016). Many critics of the current model would argue that the NCAA is failing to uphold its own standards of protecting student-athletes from commercial interests and promoting academic excellence (Murty et al., 2014). The NCAA has certainly strayed from its moorings, and while it is nearly impossible to determine when this philosophical drift began, one possible nodal point is December 5, 1992, the date of the inaugural Southeastern Conference Championship Game. Borrowing the idea from lower levels of football, SEC commissioner Roy Kramer pioneered the game and led college athletics into the modern era. While the SEC was the first major conference to play a championship game to culminate the season, others soon followed, and—by 1997—Kramer was spearheading a new system for determining the national champion (the now-defunct Bowl Championship Series). Conference championship games and the BCS brought with them unprecedented endorsements and record contracts with network television, which have—in turn—been the source of some undeniable benefits for fans, universities generally, athletic departments specifically, coaches, and—yes—even players. But somewhere along the line, the paradigm switched: We were no longer watching student-athletes but professional athletes who just happened to be enrolled in classes.

The philosophical change accompanying the growing influence of corporate powers on intercollegiate athletics has not gone unquestioned. The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics is a committee that seeks to preserve academic values within the context of college sports, producing a report on the state of college athletics every ten years. Current members include former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue and basketball hall of fame inductee David Robinson along with a collection of university presidents, government officials, and leading journalists. Prior to writing the 2001 report, a member of the Knight Commission asked the

infamous Nike executive Sonny Vaccaro, "Why should a university be an advertising medium for your industry," to which Vaccaro offered this brazen response: "They shouldn't, sir. You sold your souls and you're going to continue selling them… there's not one of you in this room that's going to turn down any of our money" (Branch, 2011). And Vaccaro was absolutely right. Schools—some individually and others through their conferences—continue to jockey for more money, controlled by what Walter Byers referred to in his memoir as a lethal greed "gnawing at the innards of college athletics" (Branch, 2011).

The NCAA is possessed by a similar form of greed, as evidence by its unequal enforcement of NCAA rules to maximize revenue. Turning back to the case where Cam Newton's father was accused of soliciting a $200,000 bribe in order for his son to attend Mississippi State University, it seems that money is more important to the NCAA than ethics. Auburn University—Newton's school—suspended him indefinitely once it learned of the accusation against Newton's father that could have rendered the star quarterback ineligible, but the NCAA made sure that Newton was reinstated just in time for the SEC championship game the following week and the BCS championship game after the season (Branch, 2011). It appears that the NCAA is hesitant to punish recruiting violations like the one involving Newton if intervening will reduce media interest in football or basketball games (Lee, 2010). But the irony and the greed do not stop there. The NCAA prohibits players from displaying personal messages on their bodies—such as biblical verses inscribed in their eye black or homages to deceased friends and relatives on their wristbands—but it codifies exactly how and where multinational corporate sponsors can display their logos on the players' bodies. Cam Newton's uniform for the SEC championship game was emblazoned with at least fifteen Under Armour logos (Branch, 2011). The NCAA simply couldn't afford for him to miss that game.

In addition to being selective with regard to which rules are enforced, the NCAA also uses discretion when determining who will be punished. While the national office regularly levies penalties and suspensions against players, they rarely come after individual schools or coaches who have shown the will to fight back in court and the ability to win. For example, the NCAA attempted to cap assistant coaches' starting salaries at $16,000 during the late 1990s and was forced to pay $54.5 million to nearly 2,000 plaintiffs as a result (Branch, 2011). History also suggests that the heaviest penalties are levied against individual athletes or tutors (in the case of academic misconduct) while the punishments for the universities tend to be largely symbolic (Branch, 2011).

Moreover, the NCAA displays significant inconsistencies regarding how it polices academic misconduct. While schools that self-report violations tend to be hit hard with penalties, those institutions that weather allegations and never admit to wrongdoing have gotten off without punishment. Take the example of the University of North Carolina, where the department of African and Afro-American studies commissioned over two hundred independent study courses for athletes that were not monitored by faculty in any respect. These were ostensibly fake classes that student-athletes were encouraged to take in order to inflate their GPAs while allowing them to devote more time to their athletic careers (Ganim & Sayers, 2014). The University of North Carolina received no punishment for these transgressions because the NCAA determined that no rules were technically broken. In and of it itself, the UNC case is alarming because the University's misconduct clearly undermined the NCAA's mission of academic excellence, but it is even more disturbing to see how high-profile programs (like UNC basketball) receive preferential treatment compared to less well-known teams.

Cases at Florida State University and the University of Missouri involve self-reported violations and the subsequent penalties from the NCAA. Florida State reported a violation in which a star player left a tutoring session early, having not transcribed his answers from paper to the computer, and the tutor asked another player to complete the assignment. University president T.K. Wetherell regretted reporting the violation, lamenting that the most honest students received the harshest suspensions while those who refused to cooperate with the investigation escaped unpenalized (Branch, 2011). In a similar case, University of Missouri officials self-reported a violation in which a tutor had been completing assignments on the behalf of multiple student-athletes. Although the infractions at UNC were much broader in scope than those at Missouri, the University of Missouri received multiple recruiting restrictions and a one-year postseason ban to be served after the 2019-2020 season while UNC was not punished. Across the nation, there is a pattern of serious rules violations by coaches and staff members that jeopardize the universities' credibility regarding ethics and integrity (Lederman, 1991a).

The frequency of academic dishonesty in big-time college sports evidences some of the deleterious effects that commercialization of sport can have on higher education. Though the NCAA used such effects as justification that amateurism protects athletes from corporate influence, it seems that the organization is doing little to protect itself and its member institutions from the temptations of corporate greed. Almost thirty years ago, the Knight Commission warned, "in too many universities with big-time athletics programs the academic mission has not been given proper priority over the athletics program" (Sigelman, 1995).

The exact cause of the shift—while up for debate—is ultimately inconsequential. The critical argument in current literature is that there "has been a shift in the institution of college sport from a focus of the mind, body, and spirit of student-athletes to an emphasis on physical

excellence of performance," often to the detriment of student-athletes, especially Black student-athletes (Singer & Armstrong, 2001). This change has been driven primarily by the exacting demands placed on college coaches to "win big and win now." Football and basketball coaches who do not win will soon be looking for work, with some coaches being terminated after as few as three unsatisfactory seasons. Therefore, many of these coaches—hoping to keep their jobs—have tilted the scale in favor of athletics at the expense of higher education. Alabama's Paul "Bear" Bryant, the most decorated college football coach of all-time, explains that the notion of the "student-athlete" being a student first and an athlete second was a naïve attempt to appease academicians: "At the level we play, the boy is really an athlete first and a student second" (Bryant & Underwood, 1974).

While there are undoubtedly many examples of the perversion of the amateur model of NCAA athletics and the denigration of higher education in order to win and make money, none is better than the story of Jan Kemp at the University of Georgia. In her time as an English instructor at the school, Kemp claims to have been demoted and eventually fired because she was unwilling to inflate the grades of revenue-producing athletes in her remedial English classes (Branch, 2011). One administrator was so bold as to ask Kemp: "Who do you think is more important to this university, you or [star basketball player] Dominique Wilkins?" Kemp's refusal to inflate grades stood in perfect alignment with the core values espoused by the NCAA: She equally applied her standards of academic excellence to all students, regardless of athletic ability. The University was found liable for illegal dismissal, and Kemp was awarded $2.5 million (Branch, 2011). The expectation that academic standards should be applied differentially to student-athletes and the general student body is common at powerhouse football and basketball schools. Taubman (1990) explains: "At places like Ohio State, Alabama, Texas, Notre Dame,

USC, Michigan, and Oklahoma, they've forgotten football is just a game. It has become a big business, completely disconnected from the fundamental purposes of academic institutions." This disconnect between athletics and academics has detrimental effects, first and foremost, on the young men and women who are told that education is the only compensation they are entitled to receive in exchange for their athletic services.

The Real Value of an Education

Graduation Trends

Every year, thousands of student-athletes compete on behalf of hundreds of colleges and universities across the United States. The principles of amateur athletics preclude these students from reaping the financial rewards of the handsome television contracts and endorsement deals their performances merit, but instead they receive an invaluable reward. They get the unlimited potential that comes with a free college education, or at least that is what they are told. Unfortunately, graduation rates suggest that many student-athletes do not come close to obtaining the education they were promised. A study at the University of North Texas found less than 20% of scholarship football players studied over a six-year period ultimately graduated from the school (Harrison, 1976). In some cases, athletes are not even taking classes that help them progress toward graduation. John Underwood (1980) quotes one coach who remarked: "You simply avoid core-curriculum-type courses that are required to move you into a degree-granting program… Take every class, participate in activity courses, learn how to officiate a volleyball game or how to play badminton, and get nowhere" While this problem afflicts student-athletes of all races, it is particularly severe among Black athletes participating in football and basketball.

As previously alluded to, Black intercollegiate athletes are not only uniquely affected by the NCAA's amateurism rules; racism also pervades in many areas of an athlete's college experience such as the relative lack of effort given to ensure Black students' educational successes. While White students are more likely to be directed toward impactful college degrees and their progress toward graduation is monitored more carefully, both anecdotal and survey-based evidence suggest that many Black students do not receive the same quality of advising. One Black student explained, "They might tell [a White athlete], 'well, you need this [course to graduate],' where the Black person, they just, you know, 'we just want you to play football pretty much'" (Singer, 2005). From the day some Black athletes arrive on campus, they are advised to major in eligibility (Wittmer, Bostic, Phillips, & Waters, 1981).

Indeed, steering Black athletes toward easy classes in order to maintain their eligibility for competition is common practice at many NCAA member institutions, often with little concern for whether or not the class satisfies a graduation requirement for that particular student. Enrolling in "Mickey Mouse" courses or ones taught by "sports-friendly" professors is usually not in the best interest of the student-athlete and evidences exploitative counseling practices that value the athlete's eligibility for competition over the student's academic potential (Byers, 1995; Murty et al., 2014). Black students have accused universities of "luring [them] out of the ghetto" with scholarships and then depriving them of a college degree, with seven Black athletes suing a well-known west coast university for $14 million. The focus on maintaining athletes' eligibility often leads counselors to push them toward the same "athlete-friendly" majors—like the African and Afro-American Studies major at UNC. Other common degrees among Division I football and basketball players are criminology, physical education, and general studies. While these majors are rigorous at most schools, a select few institutions have tailored these programs with

student-athlete eligibility in mind. As a result, even when Black student-athletes satisfy all of the requirements for graduation in these artificially lenient degree programs, they are often graduating with degrees from programs that lack tangible value or serious prospects for employment (Van Rheenen, 2012).

Defenders of status quo will justifiably claim that counselors are forced to rely on such practices because many of the Black students recruited in football and basketball attended less prestigious high schools whose insufficient resources failed to prepare the students for a college-level course load (Harper et al., 2013). In fact, these defenders are correct in so far as many student-athletes admitted on athletic scholarships would not be competitive for admission against the general applicant pool, but that disparity harkens back to the question of ethical admission practices.

Numerous studies have noted the inferior academic preparation of student-athletes—both Black and White—relative to the general student body at their schools. Purdy, Eitzen, and Hufnagel (1982) studied more than 2,000 athletes at Colorado State University over a ten-year period and found that student-athletes were more poorly prepared for college and achieved less than their non-athlete peers. A similar survey at the University of Illinois from 1931 to 1967 found that less than 5% of student-athletes possessed the academic credentials for even a "50-50 chance" of completing their freshman year with a C average or better. Moreover, of the 227 Black student-athletes in the study, only 35% graduated, and two-thirds of the Black players were physical education majors (Eitzen & Purdy, 1986). Empirical results suggest that the practice of recruiting disproportionately Black students with marginal academic profiles to enrich universities in big-time college sports exploits the athletes by using their academic

services in exchange for tuition money but seldom for an education (Eitzen & Purdy, 1986; McLeran, 2017, Underwood, 1984).

Some experts are not so quick to assign all of the blame for poor graduation rates and college achievement on high school preparation. According to an alternative explanation, student-athletes feel that they are—in a sense—school employees and they should dedicate disproportionate amounts of time toward their athletic preparation because the school is paying their bills (Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982). In their seminal paper on the role that coaches play in the education of student-athletes, Savage et al. (1929) argued that poor academic achievement among college athletes was caused by the physical rigors and time constraints enforced by their coaches and was not due to inferior academic ability. As the theory goes, the student-athlete has limited energy to devote to their studies after completing a grueling training session following a long day of class. Furthermore, the professionalization and micro-management of college athletes previously discussed fosters a bizarre existence for the student-athlete whereby he or she is isolated from the general student body. Many college athletes do not learn to take care of themselves in the way that most students do. Rather, as one coach explains, they are "protected" with "special dormitories, special food, carefully chosen courses… We coaches feel we have to try harder and harder, because that's what our competition does, and so we do more and more to segregate the athlete" (Underwood, 1984). Preferential treatment starts far earlier than college, however. Even before the recruiting process begins, the best athletes learn that no misdeed or fault of character can outweigh the value of their on-the-field talents. While these hyper-talented young people are held to strict standards of discipline on the court, they are given few restraints outside of sports (Rhoden, 2006). This infantilization of some Black college athletes has far-reaching consequences. When these young men and women exhaust their athletic eligibility, they

are pushed out into a world for which they are largely unprepared, left only to wonder, “who’s gonna handle me now.” (Wittmer et al., 1981).

The commonplace segregation of college athletes from their non-athlete peers and the overwhelming emphasis on their athletic value can create identity conflict for some players, an effect that tends to be stronger among African-American athletes, especially in football and basketball, because they have been conditioned to possess stronger athletic identity compared to their White teammates (Donnor, 2011). Their “athlete” identity is heavily scrutinized while their “student” identity is neglected (Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982). This conflict will lead some student-athletes to identify more strongly with this neglected identity while others will tend toward their role as an athlete, believing that they will have successful professional sports careers and—thus—do not need to spend too much time studying.

Career Prospects for College Athletes

Regardless of whether inferior high school preparation, inconsequential college majors, or the over-emphasis of athletic identity is to blame, the under-preparation of student-athletes for careers after sports is alarming. One way to measure the value of an education is by the increased earning power that the individual enjoys. Whether one goes to college to become a businessperson, a chemist, or a professional basketball player, most freshmen anticipate that earning a degree will allow them to command a higher wage, but this is frequently not the case for ex-college football and basketball players. As they begin a job search—either after a career in professional sports or immediately after college—student-athletes often find that they are already behind many of their same-age peers who are applying for the same jobs. While most college students have summer jobs and many more gain valuable internship experience, college

athletes—particularly those competing in football and basketball—are engaged in year-round training and do not enjoy three months off in the summer to build a professional resume.

Low graduation rates, the incidence of degrees lacking tangible value, and the relative absence of career preparation for college athletes has led one expert to proclaim that the biggest issue in college sports today is not the unwillingness to pay athletes for their services but rather "the exploitation of Black student-athletes and the dilution of their education" (Desruisseaux, 1982). While athletes twenty years ago could find jobs as manual laborers, working in factories and mines or as construction works, these jobs do not exist in the American economy in the same numbers today. The transformation of the American economy from an industrial to a technological one demands a well-trained, highly-skilled, and literate workforce, and in such an economy there is little room for the athlete who did not graduate—or who graduated without receiving a legitimate education (Desruisseaux, 1982).

Despite the many factors that can reduce the number of job opportunities available to former Division I football and basketball players, one would think that these athletes should be distinctly qualified for jobs in athletics after graduation. After all, Black men comprise only 2.4% of the undergraduate student bodies at Power Five schools but represent 55% of the football players and 56% of the basketball players, and the disproportionate representation grows at the professional level where approximately 77% of the National Basketball Association and 65% of the National Football League is Black (Harper et al., 2013; Lapchick, 2000). However, when Black student-athletes graduate, they find very few non-playing career opportunities available in athletics beyond coaching at the high school level (Murty et al., 2014).

The lack of opportunities for Blacks in athletic administration starts with entry level positions and is particularly pronounced among the top decision makers in the field. The relative

absence of Black head coaches and athletic directors at the Division I level is the vestige of racial "stacking" by which Black athletes, while critical to a team's success, have historically been prevented from occupying important positions both on and off the field (Meggyesy, 2000). Some of the most prestigious college football programs in the country do not have a single Black head coach in their entire history, with the University of Notre Dame and the University of Texas only recently hiring their first Black head coaches, though neither holds the position today (Crouper, 2017). Tyrone Willingham (hired by Notre Dame in 2002) and Charlie Strong (appointed the head football coach at Texas in 2014) became the first African-American head coaches in any sport at their respective schools, and the scarcity of Black head coaches and athletic directors certainly prevails among less prestigious football and basketball programs.

Despite the aforementioned overrepresentation of Black student-athletes in football and men's basketball, only 9.4% of head football and basketball coaches and a mere 3.9% of athletic directors at non-HBCU universities at the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year were Black (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010). The racial disparity becomes more severe as one progresses down the hierarchy of intercollegiate athletics, with Whites accounting for 87.5% of athletic directors at the Division I level in 2016, 91.2% at the Division II level, and 94.3% at the Division III level.

The National Football League has also struggled with the relative scarcity of Black head coaches, but the league has taken two measures to improve opportunities for minority coaches. Each of the league's thirty-two teams participates in the Bill Walsh Diversity Coaching Fellowship program, selecting up to four minority coaches from the high school or collegiate levels to attend training camp and offseason workouts, sharing ideas with other coaches and building strong professional networks. To address the predominance of White head coaches and

general managers, the NFL implemented the Rooney Rule in 2003. Named for longtime Pittsburgh Steelers owner Dan Rooney, the Rooney Rule requires that franchises interview at least one ethnic-minority candidate for any vacant head coaching or executive leadership position. While the Rooney Rule has not eliminated the racial imbalance among NFL head coaches and the league's top brass, it has enabled some candidates to garner interviews and job offers (Crouper, 2017).

Observing similar racial problems among college coaches, proponents of the Rooney Rule have suggested that the NCAA adopt an equivalent practice. It was even proposed that the rule be called the Robinson Rule after famed Grambling State head coach Eddie Robinson who won 408 games in his career. The NCAA, however, has resisted implementing the Robinson Rule, claiming that as a "non-profit and voluntary member association [the NCAA] cannot influence campus hiring practices in the same manner as the NFL" (Crouper, 2017). So not only are major college athletes not being compensated for their production and graduating without work experience or impactful degrees, but they are being turned away from one career path that they seem distinctly qualified to pursue.

Alternate Methods of Running an Athletic Program

While most athletic departments champion similar core values and most head coaches are merely variations on a common theme, spewing the same coaching clichés and trite, didactic parables, there are a select few programs that appear to be doing things differently. Data from a landmark study on racial inequities in intercollegiate athletics shows that coach- and department-supported culture can play a critical role in enabling student-athletes (specifically Black student-athletes) for academic success (Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013). According to the study, the six Power Five universities with the highest graduation rates for Black male student-athletes

were Northwestern University, Vanderbilt University, University of Notre Dame, Stanford University, Duke University, and Georgia Institute of Technology. Five of these six schools are private institutions—which may confer some advantage regarding graduation rates—but more importantly these six schools have decided—as collective institutions—not to sacrifice their academic reputations and standards in pursuit of athletic success. These six schools' dedication to academic excellence is evidenced in two ways. First—and unlike many of the institutions who have the worst graduation rates for Black male student athletes—these universities refuse to fully relax their admission criteria for athletes. While many players at these schools would have struggled to gain admission to these prestigious universities without athletics, the coaches and admission officers are committed to recruiting *student-athletes* rather than freak athletes who struggle to qualify academically with the NCAA clearinghouse. As a result, the players who are awarded scholarships at schools like Duke and Stanford tend to come from stronger academic backgrounds, with the average football player scoring over 1,000 on the SAT (Sigelman, 1995). Additionally, the coaches at these six universities grant their players time away from athletic training during mid-term and final exams, which—although not unheard of at other universities—is more the exception than the rule. In those schools with the highest graduation rates for male Black student-athletes (BSAs), a high level of value is placed on both identities—the student and the athlete.

Pairwise comparisons of similar schools in the Harper study also offer evidence that institutional changes can improve graduation rates for male BSAs. While traditional beliefs might suggest that the quality of pre-college education (often determined by the quality of public schools in the region) will determine graduation rate, data suggest four revelatory pairwise comparisons that dispel this notion. In addition to the aforementioned six universities, the list of

the top ten Power Five universities for male BSA graduation rates includes University of Michigan, Wake Forest University, University of Louisville, and University of Miami. Interestingly, the list of the bottom ten schools for male BSA graduation rates includes four schools that are regional rivals to those in the top ten: Ohio State University, University of North Carolina, University of Kentucky, and University of Florida. These four pairs of schools (Michigan-Ohio State, Wake Forest-North Carolina, Louisville-Kentucky, and Miami-Florida) suggest that coach and administrator support might play a critical role in determining academic outcomes. After all, these schools recruit the same student-athletes from the same schools, are expected to perform similarly athletically, and are based in culturally similar college towns (with the exception of Miami and Gainesville, FL). Interestingly, there appears to be no connection between a team's average test score and their level of success on the field. While Stanford finished the 2016 football season with a record of 10-3, Duke—with players who scored almost as highly as Stanford's on the SAT—finished a pitiful 4-8. Similar historical trends can be found among the other pairwise comparisons in the study.

Black Student-Athletes and Discrimination on Campus

In addition to lower graduation rates, Black student-athletes are often discriminated against in both their academic and social contexts. While Black males make up approximately 60% of all Division I scholarship basketball players and 43% of scholarship football players, they are severely outnumbered on college campuses in general where—across Division I—only around 6% of students are Black (Lederman, 1991b). African-American student-athletes are thus doubly isolated—first as athletes and then as Black students—which can lead to integration and adjustment problems early in college (Hyatt, 2003). These struggles to adjust to college life are compounded my discrimination experienced on campus. Through a series of case studies,

Beamon (2014) found this student's sentiment to be common: "A lot of professors see athletes as a problem. They figure you not gone come to class, you not gone do your work, you know a hassle." Even worse, twenty-nine percent of Black student-athletes reported being accused of cheating on assignments while only six percent of their White teammates faced similar allegations (Simons et al., 2007). In addition to being regarded as—at best—nuisances or—worse yet—cheaters, Black student-athletes often feel unwelcome at restaurants or other businesses near their respective universities. One football player explained that, unless he was wearing team-issued apparel, "people in the town just acted like they didn't want me there" (Beamon, 2014).

Perceived racial and athletic discrimination both on and around college campuses has been corroborated by large surveys, with 66% of African-American students experiencing racial discrimination on campus and 85% viewing their campus as racially hostile (Biasco, Goodwin, & Vitale, 2001). Studies have shown that many professors harbor prejudicial beliefs toward athletes in general, but Black athletes tend to encounter these prejudices more frequently than their White teammates (Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995). While discrimination on campus tends to devalue Blacks as students, an alternate form of discrimination emphasizes their value as athletes. In 1966, the Southeastern Conference became the last major college athletic conference to integrate, and within twenty years 88% of the starting basketball players in the league were Black, but the integration of Blacks into athletics does not guarantee their acceptance on campus (Reed, 1991). In fact, many White students see Black athletes as inferior, admitted only under special circumstances to compete for the school's glory on the gridiron or the hardwood (Murty et al., 2014; Hyatt, 2003). These findings present a juxtaposition of roles that is difficult to navigate. For many Black male athletes, racial invisibility and athletic hyper-

visibility undermine holistic personal identity and suggest that schools value their athletic prowess but not their academic potential (Harris, 2000).

Unfortunately, emphasis on athletic skills—rather than other identities—for Black males is not peculiar to American universities. By the time they arrive on campus, most college athletes will have been exposed to—if not subscribe to—the ideology that dark skinned people have innate abilities that uniquely equip them to excel in sports such as football and basketball (Walton & Butryn, 2006). According to this school of thought, Blacks possess genetic traits that contribute to greater strength, speed, agility, heat tolerance, and general hardiness compared to Whites (Hoberman, 1997). Empirical data does not support this eugenic argument of Black superiority that is—in fact—damaging to Black individuals because it is accompanied by the corollary that they also possess certain innate intellectual deficiencies relative to Whites (Coakley, 2009). Although the view that Blacks are better than Whites at sports affords some Black student-athletes admission to college, it simultaneously preserves White status because the Black students are perceived to be intellectually inferior (Bell, 1992). Additionally, beliefs about Blacks' hardwired athletic abilities and academic shortcomings create a culture of low expectations for African-American students in the classroom. For many, simply meeting minimum academic requirements through elementary and high school and maintaining eligibility in college is considered to be a perfectly acceptable level of performance, and thus the "dumb Black jock" is not born but is created from an early age as important influencers including parents and teachers temper academic expectations rather than demanding students rise to meet them (Edwards, 1984). These myths have a combined destructive effect as talented young Black athletes are heralded as paradigms of success in poor Black communities and Black youth are encouraged to pursue sports and eschew academics (Murty et al., 2014).

While some view this mis-counseling of young Black athletes as a moral weakness of Black communities in the United States, scholars critical of this view contend that this stereotyping results from "White institutional racism which has limited Black access to the full spectrum of prestige occupational opportunities" (Murty et al., 2014; Singer, 2005). Blacks have fewer opportunities than Whites in other fields, so some have embraced athletics as a means by which the young Black man can achieve upward social mobility—with some Black parents encouraging their children to "forget White pipe dreams" (Edwards, 1986). According to Hoberman (1997), the sports fixation has been a way for the Black community to cope with the "Negro inferiority complex" that results from the exclusion of Blacks from the ranks of the intellectual elite. Serving this psychological complex, middle-class publications such as *Ebony* extensively cover Black celebrities, including athletes, at the expense of important stories of black achievement in other professions, and, thus, the glorification of Black athletes as "race heroes" harms Black children who do not see such prominent role models in other domains and are encouraged to follow paths of physical, rather than intellectual, rigor and achievement (Hoberman, 1997).

Conclusion and Future Directions

The current body of literature suggests a complicated set of circumstances and a discouraging outlook for Black male student-athletes in higher education, particularly in the Power Five conferences. There are issues of systemic racism and exploitation that serve to disenfranchise young Black men competing in major college sports, but coaches and administrators have the power and the responsibility to improve these circumstances. For the last fifteen years, faculty and university presidents have warned against "the promotion of entertainment sports at the expense of academic priorities of higher education" (Bowen & Levin,

2003). An unwillingness to heed that warning has created a critical situation in which college athletes are unable to perform first as a student and second as an athlete, with differential effects based on sport, gender, and racial group.

Thus, there are two important ways the NCAA can improve the big-time college athlete's lot: Place the appropriate emphasis on both halves of being a *student*-athlete and pay players in proportion the revenue they generate. In the coming years, NCAA, conference, and university leaders need to pay special attention to racial graduation trends within teams, GPAs, course enrollment, major selection patterns, career development, and progress toward graduation (Harper et al., 2013). While many "conventional" personal and career development opportunities such as study abroad, summer internships, and research opportunities with faculty are likely to conflict with student athletes' training and competition schedules, this is not an excuse for coaches and athletics administrators to concede defeat. Rather, they must either alter the demands placed on student-athletes or find unconventional ways to provide these enriching experiences.

Even if colleges were able to improve the quality of student-athlete education and fulfill the spirit of the school-for-play agreement, the scholarship contract markedly favors the NCAA and its member institutions. Gaines (2017) testifies to the amount of value that a college player creates for his university, claiming that a basketball player at Louisville University has a "fair market value" of $1.5 million while a football player at the University of Texas creates $564,000 of additional value for the Longhorns. The NCAA has numerous counterarguments claiming the dangers of professionalizing amateur athletics and the competitive inequality such a system would introduce, but the Olympics offer a successful precedent for allowing previously-unpaid athletes to receive endorsements (Branch, 2011). Furthermore, economists show that current

compensation regulations already fail to enforce competitive equality between universities. Those schools that generate the highest revenues are able to spend more money on facilities and to attract the best coaches, giving them a recruiting advantage over less well-funded programs (*O'Bannon v. NCAA*, 2015). Fancy lockers with personal TVs, enormous hot tubs, and private bowling alleys and miniature golf courses just outside the locker-room are merely legalized forms of financial benefits provided to players at powerhouse programs. While these perks do not amount to cash-in-hand, they do provide a financial basis for a prospective student-athletes to make their college decisions. Tragically, facilities do play a significant role in the college recruiting process—often swaying high school athletes more than the quality of education they will receive even though education will have a much more lasting impact than the kind of locker a player has during his college career. While the question of paying college athletes in exchange for their services remains extremely controversial, the status quo in which players compete as amateurs while their coaches, universities, and the NCAA grow richer amounts to a great injustice against predominantly Black student-athletes in big-time college sports.

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